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BACK OF THE SECRET

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IN THE ASSASSINATION PROBE FOIAb3b

As the official probe of President Kennedy's death unfolds—

There's restlessness among some members of Chief Justice Warren's commission about its slow pace. There's questioning, too, about the veil of secrecy.

Nevertheless, from behind closed doors, a clear picture is starting to emerge.

This can now be reported about the progress of the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy:

- The hearings, going on behind closed doors, will drag on another six months.

- When they end, Lee Harvey Oswald will not be named positively as the assassin.

- The seven-member commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, probably will come up with only one major finding—that there was no foreign plot involved in the murder.

As for Oswald, the commission has found that almost all the evidence points to him as the killer. But the panel is not expected to say so in so many words. The final verdict is to be left to the public. Reason: There just is no positive proof.

These are the indications from sources close to the probe as the inquiry, ordered by President Johnson, moves into its third month. The inquiry has been painstaking and slow—so slow that some members reportedly are thinking about resigning if it is not speeded up.

Up to mid-February, the panel had heard only two witnesses—Oswald's widow, Marina, and his mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald. Neither is said to have contributed anything so new or startling that it changes the story told publicly after the assassination on November 22.

Why, then, is the Oswald probe so shrouded in secrecy? This is what many Congressmen and others want answered.

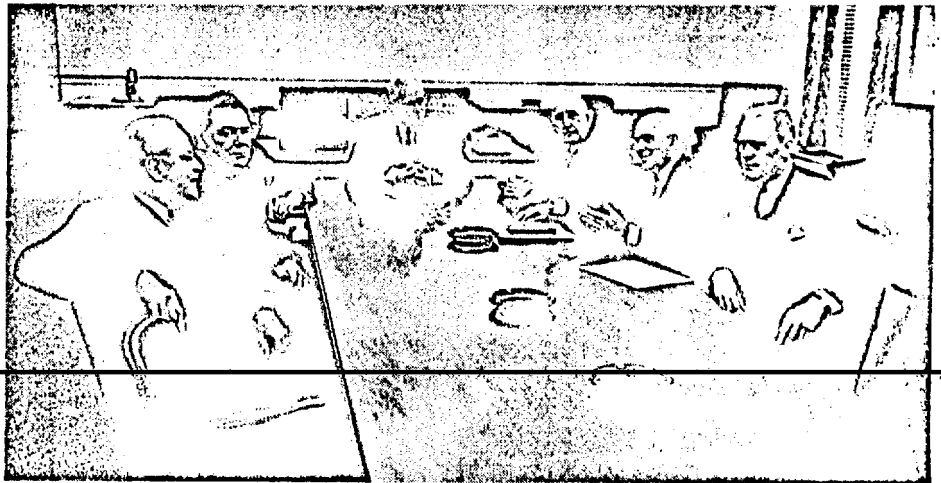
Red intrigue? The issue was raised when Mr. Warren told reporters that some of the information gathered by the panel might "not be released in your lifetime." The reason, he said, was that some points might jeopardize the nation's security if made public.

Reaction to his remarks was swift. A number of Congressmen said there is no good reason for secrecy now. Demanded Representative Earl Wilson (Rep.), of Indiana: "Is the real force behind the assassination thus being protected? Was world Communism engaged in a master plot to kill our leader?"

Like other lawmakers and editors, he demanded full disclosure of the facts. Otherwise, the Congressmen argued, rumors about the assassination will continue to thrive. They pointed out that

Harder to explain are the cloak-and-dagger methods used to shield the commission staff and witnesses. The panel's fourth-floor offices in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Building—two blocks from the U. S. Capitol—are virtually off limits to the public much of the time. Reporters also are barred by police from talking to witnesses except in the lobby of the building—and then only for a few minutes.

Even the commission members won't talk publicly. Each informally agreed



—USN&WR Photo

THE WARREN COMMISSION. Its investigation is designed to prevent uncertainties of the sort that surround such past tragedies as President Lincoln's assassination.

President Johnson himself ordered the commission to report its findings "to the American people and to the world."

Commission sources said later that Mr. Warren's reference to "security" had nothing to do with talk of an alleged Communist plot against President Kennedy. Rather, they said, the Chief Justice had in mind such matters as details of how the FBI investigates a case. Such information, if released, would impair future FBI operations, according to the sources, and would not change the substance of the report anyway.

The critics, however, contend the withholding of even that material could be used to hide reported bad feeling between the FBI and the Secret Service. The agencies reportedly feuded over the way the investigation was handled, although Government officials have denied the reports.

to secrecy when appointed by President Johnson on November 29.

As a result, information on the hearings comes out in bits and pieces. The only official spokesman is the Chief Justice, who answers reporters' questions for a moment or two after hearings.

Widow's testimony. It is known, however, that Oswald's Russian-born widow spent most of her time in the witness chair identifying 145 exhibits, including the rifle used to kill Mr. Kennedy. She said the gun was Oswald's.

The alleged killer's mother, however, maintained her son was innocent. She told the commission about Oswald's activities from 1959, when he moved to Russia, until he was killed by Jack Ruby, a Dallas bar owner, November 24.

At the same time, another part of the assassination picture was becoming